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**Title:** Understanding British youth behaviors on holiday in Ibiza

**Year of publication:** 2012

**Citation:** Briggs, D. and Turner, T.(2012) "Understanding British youth behaviors on holiday in Ibiza", *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 6(1), pp.81 – 90, doi: 10.1108/17506181211206270

**Link to published version:**

[10.1108/17506181211206270](http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17506181211206270)

**Publisher statement:**

Published version available at

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=17024808>

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# **Understanding British youth behaviors on holiday in Ibiza**

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September 2010

Research paper

The authors than Dave Baker and John Woolham at Coventry University for reviewing the paper. Additional thanks to Arch Woodside for his helpful comments. The authors extend thanks to Tara de Courcey and Kerri David for their assistance with some of the field work and the 97 British young people who provide information for this research. Send correspondence to Daniel Briggs, Senior Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice School of Law, University of East London, High street, Stratford, London. E15 2JB. United Kingdom. ([d.briggs@uel.ac.uk](mailto:d.briggs@uel.ac.uk)), Tel: 044 (0) 208 223 2338, Fax: 0044 (0) 208 223 2927. Tim Turner, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Department of Social and Community Studies, Coventry University, Jordan Well, Coventry. CV1 5FB United Kingdom. ([t.turner@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:t.turner@coventry.ac.uk)), Tel: 0044 (0) 24 7679 5824.

**Biography**

Daniel Briggs works with a range of different social groups – from the most vulnerable to the most dangerous. His work takes him inside prisons, crack houses, mental health institutions, asylum seeker institutions, hostels, and various homeless services. He does research abroad with illegal immigrants, gypsies and substance users in Spain and Portugal. His research interests include processes of social exclusion, culture and deviance, and identity and perceptions of the self.

**Biography**

Tim Turner is Senior Lecturer in Criminology. He was previously employed as a Forensic Community Psychiatric Nurse in London and worked extensively with alcohol and drug users. He is currently involved in ethnographic research with mentally disordered victims. His research interests include mental health, substance abuse, and youth cultures.

## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

The behavior of British youth abroad has caused considerable concern over recent years. This is because many British youth engage in binge drinking, drug use, sex behavior and other risk behaviors - especially in the Balearics, Spain. While research has documented levels of alcohol use, drug use, risk and sex behaviors on these islands, it tends to rely on survey data. This article aims to offer some contextualization to the British youth holiday experience and to examine why such behaviors might take place.

### **Methodology**

The study uses ethnographic methods (observation, open-ended focus groups) with British youth in San Antonio, Ibiza. Over the course of one week in July 2010, seventeen focus groups were undertaken (n=97 aged between 17 and 31). Observations were conducted in bars, clubs, beaches, and general touristic areas.

### **Findings**

The data suggests that young people engage in these behaviors not only to escape the constraints of work and family but also because they are exciting. The data also indicates that these behaviors appeared to help British youth construct life biographies which were integral to their identity construction. The findings are also considered within the social context of Ibiza which also played a role in promoting these behaviors.

**Originality/Value**

No ethnographic research exists on the topic of British youth and their behaviors abroad.

Previous research is mostly epidemiological survey research which does not adequately consider the social meaning and context for the behavior of British youth abroad

**Abstract count:** 240 words

**Key words:** British youth, holiday, risk, drugs, alcohol, sex and risk behaviors.

## 1 Introduction

Ibiza is a popular holiday destination choice for British youth (Govern de les Illes de Balears, 2007). It is specifically marketed (Sellars 1998) because of the international reputation for nightlife (Bellis, Hughes, Bennett, and Thomson, 2003; IREFREA, 2007), “wild” party scene and easy access to illegal substances (Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes, Bellis, and Choudry, 2004; Josiam, Hobson, Dietrich, and Smeaton, 1998; Segev, Paz, and Potasman, 2005; Smeaton, Josiam, and Dietrich, 1998). Historically, the economy of Ibiza relies heavily on the commercial promotion of clubs and DJs (Garratt, 1998) as well as the drug market (Armstrong, 2004).

For British youth, Ibiza is therefore indelibly associated with dance music, alcohol, drug use and sex (Bellis et al., 2003; Calafat, Stocco, Mendes, Simon, van de Wijngaart, Sureda, Palmer, Maalste, and Zavatti, 1998; Engineer, Phillips, Thompson, and Nicholls, 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Hughes, Bellis, Whelan, Calafat, Juan, and Blay, 2009). However, prior United Kingdom (UK) research in Ibiza are survey-based studies (Bellis, Hale, Bennett, Chaudry and, Kilfoyle, 2000; Bellis et al., 2003; Department of Health, 2005; Hughes et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2009).

Such epidemiological studies tend to portray youth behaviors abroad as dangerous and the young people who engage in them as vulnerable. However cultural studies researchers argue that young people are “active negotiators of the relationship between structure and agency” (Ettore and Miles, 2002: 173).

To date there no ethnographic analysis explores reasons why British youth might engage in these behaviors whilst on holiday abroad. This issue is the primary aim of the article. While research shows that British youth do this to escape the constraints of work and family which moderate everyday behaviors (Bellis, Hughes and, Lowey, 2002; Carter, 1997; Carter, Horn, Hart, Dunbar, Scoular, and MacIntyre, 1997; Ryan and Kinder, 1996) others

suggest the thrill of transgression and the seductions of risk are relevant reasons (Hayward, 2002) and the intent to construct meaning through “memorable” holiday experiences. This conclusion is important to consider because of the fluidity of late modern identities (Bauman, 2004; 2007); with young people increasingly expected to construct their own biographies (Helve and Bynner, 2007) in uncertain times (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991); and doing so through the consumption of items such as fashion, music and drugs (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Miles, 2000).

This study shows how the quest to construct these memorable “experiences” among British youth interplays with the aggressive commercialization and commodification of pleasure and youthful excess in Ibiza. This relationship is integral to youth biographies and identities, and therefore important to consider for understanding why British youth engage in substance use and various sex and risk behaviors abroad.

The aims of the research project include completing the following objectives: examine the drinking attitudes among British youth abroad; investigate the reasons which underpin these attitudes; explore the role of bars and clubs, and tour operators in the promotion of alcohol. An additional research interest is drug use, sex and risk behaviors. The research was carried out from June 2010 to July 2010.

## **2 Methods**

This research study applies an ethnographic method (Hammersley, 1992). The study included three stages. The first stage involves gathering relevant material on the subject area. The second stage uses six focus groups with young people who are experienced on such holidays. The third and final stage uses focus groups and observations in Ibiza. Observations were conducted in bars, clubs, beaches, and general touristic areas. These areas were public and activity was observed which would have happened without intervention or influence

from researchers. The intention was not necessarily to “[live] the life to the extent that it is legally and ethically possible” (Inciardi, 1995: 251) but rather to make astute objective observations of British youth and their behaviors. The study uses a delicate combination of overt and covert roles (see Adler, 1985; Agar, 1986; Bourgois, 1995). Low inference descriptors (field notes) record precise detailed descriptions of participants and their activities (Van Maanen, 1988). Researchers’ thoughts and impressions accompany these notes, as well as summaries of conversations. This information was noted within a few hours of concluding observation sessions and these data were entered directly into a password-secured laptop.

Seventeen focus groups were undertaken in Ibiza (n=97, aged between 17 and 31) over one week. The focus groups were open-ended. This enabled researchers to determine how British youth interpret and talk about their behaviors (Carlson, Wang, Siegal, Falck and, Guo, 1994). They were digitally recorded, with signed/verbal consent. No formal sampling strategy was done and recruiting groups into the study was entirely opportunistic. Every group which was approached agreed to participate in the research.

Informal conversations were also undertaken with local businesses, bar owners, taxi drivers and tourist representatives about their perceptions of British youth abroad. Informal conversations were mentally noted and written up into observation notes. All participants were given pseudonyms. Once transcribed, interview and observation data was categorized thematically, with the key areas of investigation providing the overall framework for coding (Ritchie and Spencer, 2004). Analyses were inductive, which meant that themes emerged from the data rather than being hypothesized.

### **3 Findings**

#### **3.1 Ibiza: The place to “be”**

Daniel [Interviewer and author]: Why come to Ibiza?



GG 1: For the “experience”. Something a bit different.

Daniel: But what is so “different” about it?

GG 1: Atmosphere, init. [Eats baked beans] Back home I hear of other places like to go on holiday but not hear...I mean people talk more about Ibiza so for us back home, Ibiza is the best place to go, the place to be.

GG2: That’s it, init.

Many young people hear how “amazing” Ibiza is through their peer networks. While some young people had never experienced Ibiza, some had already visited the island on four or five occasions. A few, in their early 30s, had visited Ibiza every summer for the last 12 years. A high proportion of young people appeared to have built up a bank of holiday experiences in destinations such as Zakynthos, Kos, Malia (all Greek islands), Aiyia Napa (Cyprus) and Magaluf (Majorca). However, it was Ibiza that had most attracted them. Many expressed a desire to come and “experience” the clubs, bars, drugs and general atmosphere of Ibiza. They appeared willing to spend very large sums of money (€14,000 in one month between two young Brits) to capture that experience:

Beachgirl 1: I don’t care about money here. I don’t think twice, I saved this money to put it on this [holiday].

Daniel: And what if you need to withdraw more money?

Beachgirl 1: Like, I would care, like a little bit pissed off, but you are on holiday.

Beachgirl 2: I only have £1 in my account at the moment.

Many explain how the Ibiza “experience” acts as a relief from the tedium of daily work and family pressures back in the UK. Typically, Neil says “You are working all year. In England, you haven’t got sun, you haven’t got beaches. It is different. You are away for two weeks. You think about nothing else but you on holiday. Go away, get hammered, get laid.” Life at home is constructed as mundane and the holiday experience offers a chance for them to express themselves.

### 3.2 Ibiza: Lasting memories, “anonymous” identities

Chatterbox: Yeah, but we only go on holiday once a year, nah what I mean. Think of all the memories you are gonna get. No kids, no commitments, you won’t be able to do this soon.

Bam Bam: Yeah, its like the memories. Like, the next day we go through all four cameras to see what happened [the previous evening].

Chatterbox: We wait all year for this as well. We need to make the most of it.

Young people in the sample had few qualms about spending hundreds of Euros as they gain a priceless return of memorable experiences. However, in Ibiza, many young people appear to think it is an opportunity to forget “whoever” they are, and instead opt to embrace anonymity and “be” someone different. Because no one knows who they are and no one is regulating their behavior (not even their friends because “what goes on in Ibiza, stays in Ibiza”), it frequently means they often engage in behavior that they would not normally do back in the UK. In a focus group of three male friends in Ibiza, this man in his mid-twenties said:

Man 1: There is no restriction here, back home there is restriction. I have a family and work...everyone is on edge. The police, everyone! Here, no

one looks at you twice. [Back home you] Got to think about work, bills, pressure, but here [in Ibiza] you don't think about shit, it is all about you, your friends and relaxing. You just enjoy it.

Daniel: Have you had any luck with the women yet?

Man 1: Oh yeah...I had a good time [winks at me and high fives me].

Daniel: Ok, so you have a girlfriend but stuff happened here.

Man 1: I wouldn't say I have a girlfriend, I would say I have a wife.

The "holiday" environment appears to offer new parameters for individual and group permissiveness because many young people sought to construct these memorable experiences with their friends through drunken/drug/sex events. In fact, it is because many of the sample travel in groups that these kind of behaviors are encouraged. In this conversation, these young Scottish men describe women as "holes":

Daniel: We were just talking about 'holes' and whether you were up for any.

Scot 1: [Sitting down and interrupting own sip of cocktail] Fucking right, fucking right.

Dan: Right, so how many 'holes' have you had?

Scot 1: Two. Bad ones. Smelly ones, stinking fucking ones. Came all over them. Hookers.

Scot 2: Whatever happens in Ibiza, stays in Ibiza.

Scot 1: [High fives Scot 2] Fucking right. Fuck the STDs.

They explain how these activities are not attempted at home in order to protect their pride and reputation. On holiday, however, it creates memorable experiences which can be

recounted on facebook and with peers when they return. In this sense, the world is captured in the immediacy of the digital camera image more than through actual memory. In another example, researchers spent 18 hours with some young men who had drunk around 12 pints of beer during the day, snorted cocaine, and each taken three ecstasy pills over the course of the night.

Yet still their experience continues:

And it didn't stop there because when they got back to the hotel at 7am they went to get the CD player and headed down to the beach to take Ketamine – purchased earlier from a mate who dealt drugs on the island. On the beach they were “mashed”. As Simon took the Ketamine, there was a thud as he hit the floor. His mates grabbed his arm and dragged him in the sea while he was still semi-conscious – laughing while they did it...When we return later that morning, we find Simon decorated in nail clippings, sun tan lotion and cigarette ash. He also cut his own hair with scissors. When Simon woke up, he said “what happened to me, where is my leg” because he could not move it because of the sleeping position he had been in – we suppose – or was it the after effects of the Ketamine?

[Field notes: Nightclubbing 27.7.10 and The recovery 28.7.10]

Their Facebook pages show these images from this night and many comments on the “crazy night it was”. Some young people appear to take an odd reassurance in their construction of the Ibiza “experience” - despite the sinister and brutal consequences. A group of young girls in our sample said they had been molested by “foreign men” and beaten by both nightclub bouncers and police. This happened only five hours prior to the interview. When the interview began, they were understandably angry about their victimization but after

40 minutes, the anger desisted and their attitude changed. They had already started to think about their potential facebook statuses:

Sunglasses 1: This morning we are all serious but now we are laughing about it in a way.

Broad accent 1: Icing on the cake. [Laughs]

Tim [Interviewer and author]: Have any of you put this on facebook yet?

All: No, not yet.

Sunglasses 1: Not had time but we will after this [breakfast].

Blue eyed 1: In the car, on the way home from all this [the police station] I thought about it [facebook status]. Mines going to be: ‘Arrested and assaulted in Ibiza...very typical me’.

Sunglasses 1: Mine is going to be: “Welcome to fucking Ibiza...already been molested and arrested”.

The highly traumatic event is magically transformed into a “great story” within a few short hours of it happening; one which they can recount for many years.

### 3.3 Ibiza: Designed for the “experience”

Daniel: But what is the point in getting fucked [drunk]?

Girl 1: We come here for a couple of weeks and last night, I didn’t want to get pissed [drunk]. So we just walked around [San Antonio] and did nothing, there was nothing else to do. So we ended up getting pissed for nothing. There are no places to go.

Daniel: Is it designed for you to get pissed?

Girl 2: Yeah but I like that, fucking right I like that.

The data also shows that these “Ibiza experiences” embraced by British youth are heavily influenced and shaped by a social context that aggressively promotes alcohol, drugs and sex. So while young people actively engage in behaviors that they perceive as expected within the social context of Ibiza, so Ibiza endorses and facilitates these behaviors. In these few minutes spent on the main drinking strip in San Antonio, one can see how aggressively alcohol is marketed:

Promo woman: Are you coming in again?

Daniel: Again? We haven’t been in yet! How did you remember us?

Promo woman: Yeah, come in for some drinks.

We move on. As I look down the strip, the streets are strewn with drink bottles, vomit, waste, half-eaten burgers, chips and all manner of rubbish. Suddenly:

Lively promo man: Come in here to have a drink. Get two free shots as well, guys.

Daniel: [looking at the sign] 10€?

Lively promo man: [Physically shepherding me in] What would you like to drink?

Tara: We’ll try you in a while.

Daniel: We’re coming back, calm down.

Lively promo man: Come down now, come on, come in.

Daniel: No.

Lively promo man: Try it now.

Daniel: Er, NO.

Lively promo man: [As if nothing has happened] Ok, guys enjoy your night.

30 seconds later:

Chirpy promo man: Two drinks and a shot for 8€..[Daniel Briggs Field

notes: A walk on the strip – 29.7.10]

Young people reflect on the wide availability of illicit drugs. While some career Ibiza goers (a few coming each summer for the last 12 years) said that there is now an increased regulation of the drug market, illegal substances nevertheless remain overtly available. Many young people receive drug offers on the streets, in alleyways, bars, cafes, clubs and hotels. If they are not drug aware before their trip to Ibiza, they certainly were by the end of their holiday:

Tim: How many times a day do you receive offers for drugs?

Matt: About ten times a day.

Tim: Where does that normally take place?

Scott: On the street, anywhere. Pills, coke, weed.

Daniel: How much?

Scott: Never really asked.

Matt: Pills are about 10€each.

Daniel: That seems a lot.

Matt: Coke is £60 a gram. Don't know how much weed is.

Steve: Ketamine is 20€a gram.

Scott: That is the big hype at the moment.

Many also took drugs and said that they know drug dealers in Ibiza. Others just deal directly with local dealers through hearsay. Yet even with the occasional police car search and talk of increased regulation of drugs, little seemed to impact on how young people use drugs to experience the atmosphere, the music, and clubs in Ibiza – for many know that the experience of music and drugs link inextricably:

A sea of people move before me, waving and dancing to techno music. It is easy to see who is on pills because those people are all drinking water. Some hide their eyes (their state) with sunglasses. Others just close their eyes. Everyone seems to be worshipping the DJ who is placed like a god at the centre of the club. We walk through, passing droves of people who don't acknowledge us – they focus on the music. Around the same sort of time, some resident dancers come out and dance next to the DJ – not on the same level as him – but nearby. They seem to know their routines. I remember a conversation with a former dancer who said that the club dancer's life is "good money" but all you do is the same thing each night – a line of cocaine, 20 minutes of dancing, a line of cocaine, 20 minutes of dancing. Some, she estimated, could earn 100€ a night. The beat changes slightly while odd-toned/off-toned notes drift up and down the scale. It is playing with my mind. It now drifts into a searching beat which makes me feel like I am being chased. Well, this is how I am interpreting it with the level I have achieved after a beer and a shot. I am happy to dance for a short while to get in the mix. There is some break in the music and I think the track has finished but it just merges into another and there are some sporadic claps. As the lights flicker and dart, I stand quite amazed. Within 20 minutes I start to notice different dance patterns. Even though the music does not appear to be changing, young people seem to move as:



1. Knee benders (with minimal and similar movement and just bending one knee to the music)
2. Side steppers (slightly more movement combined with random hand movements)
3. Wavey handers (almost the full works but with a greater dedication to hand movements and more improvised with their footwork)
4. Jolty movers (the most flamboyant and chaotic movers – combining all sorts of hand and leg gestures)

The type of dance one does not seem to matter – that is, no one is evaluating others, what they are wearing, how they are moving or who they are with - so these moves are accepted among the collective. I walk into the toilets. There seem to be a lot of people hanging around outside. I go for a piss and to my right side are the cubicles. They are all locked and a giant sniff is heard behind one. The odd thing is there are no shadows under the toilet doors (which would indicate there are people there). I take my time and stick around for 10 minutes and no one emerges. They are taking drugs and this is confirmed when I start talking to the cleaning lady:

[Another sniff is heard as I dry my hands and I pull a face at the cleaning lady]

Cleaning lady: [In Spanish] They are taking drugs [she says nonchalantly].

Daniel: Yes.

Cleaning lady: Of course they are, every night the same.

Daniel: How long do they stay in there?

Cleaning lady: Can be up to an hour and we have to call the security from time to time because some collapse in there.

[I take my chewing gum out]

Cleaning lady: Bin? [Points to the bin in the corner]

As I walk around the room with difficulty, more young people pile into club and there seems to be no regulation on numbers. I come into even closer physical contact with people but the truth is people here are just not bothered about that. Whereas these actions may cause some upset in the clubs back home [in the UK] when people are on some crazy drinking bender there seems to be nothing but love in the club. When I do bump into someone, I receive a pat on the arm or the shoulder to signify acknowledgement of that bump. I am among friends here. [Daniel Briggs

Field notes: Nightclubbing – 27.7.10]

With the promotion of clubs, comes the promotion and availability of drugs. Clubs appear to tolerate drug use by large numbers of young people because of the profit margins reaped. The data also points to the aggressive promotion of sex:

As we approach the main drinking strip in San Antonio, promo reps and prostitutes maul us eager for business. The prostitutes jeer at us and we don't really know which way to turn...Eventually we settle in a bar. It is now about 3am. I leave for the toilet where I meet an African man singing away to himself – he “earns money from tips” by keeping the toilets clean and offering fresh manly sprays to attract the ‘punani’ (Indian word for female sexual organs or slang meaning pussy):

African man: You well man?

Daniel: [while urinating] Yes, thank you.

African man: You want some pussies? I love dem pussies.

Daniel: Er... Yes [Sounding confused]. I am here for the punani.

[This seems to trigger him and he starts to sing]

African man: Go punani, go punani. Punani, punani, go punani. Do do do, de de de. Wash yor finger for de minger [ugly girl]. Freshen up, up, up for de pu-na-ni. Thinking about the pu-na-ni, pu-na-ni, pu-na-ni, thinking about pu-na-ni, pu-na-ni. PU-NA-NI. [Some more young men enter the toilet] Freshen up, up, up for de punani [they laugh]. Wash yor finger for de minger.

[As I leave he says aggressively]

African man: What have you got for me, man?

Daniel: Nothing I'm afraid.

An hour later, after we watch the waiter empty whole spirit bottles down the necks of a group of young British men:

Tara: There is a girl walking around in her G-String [the stripper outside the gentleman's club], throwing herself at all the men and they are not having it [tolerating it].

Suzanne: She is throwing herself at men but its just they are turning her down.

[We look over and the poor girl looks quite unstable and cannot stand straight. When she manages to stand, she rearranges her hair and pulls her G-String back over the area which it should be covering]

Tara: She is off her face [on drugs].

Kerri: You have to be to do a job like that.

We move on to another bar and drink a round. We all start dancing but when Tara unexpectedly leaves, I go to look for her. In the confusion, I lose the rest of the group and am left wondering the streets and am at the mercy of the prostitutes. It is now about 5am and I get completely harangued by them. The prostitutes seem mostly to be African women but it is difficult to say from which country. They tug my arms, asking if they can “suck me off” – clearly this is the height of their business as people seem more and more drunk. Perhaps also because there are people like me, who have lost their crowd and are wondering the streets alone. As I walk around trying to find everyone, strippers also approach me with sexual offers. [Daniel Briggs Field notes: A night on the town – 26.7.10]

Several young men in the sample said they had sex with prostitutes - all said they were drunk at the time. They play down the risks, instead suggesting it is something they do for the “experience”. Local businesses, to some extent, tolerate these behaviors because the British bring immense capital to the island. Many British youth spend hundreds of pounds every night in clubs, taxis, drugs, drink, and food. Therefore, the clubs, the bars, the taxi drivers – the economy – need this income and therefore happily stomach the behaviors the British bring because it is good business:

Daniel: How do you cope with us British?

Bar owner: Some ones are like animals but some are like you, like gentlemen. We live with British people here, without British, this island goes down.

Daniel: So you need us. You have no choice. But there are Italians, Spanish, Germans here. What's different from the British?

Bar owner: Well, all the Spanish don't like going where the British are, they hate it. I love British people [puts his hands on my hands].

Daniel: I can see that.

Bar owner: Well, all my friends are from UK. I...I...I love them.

Daniel: So what do you do with people who misbehave in your bar?

Bar owner: I work with them, talk to them, make them happy, sell them drinks, we sell a lot.

Daniel: So how much do you make in a day from us British?

Bar owner: Not my business, I just get people in, make them happy, make them drink. I don't ask anyone, anything. Lets say you are together [as a couple], you and her [points at Kerri]. You get with a girl in my bar and I see it. Next day I don't ask "you alright, you have good time?" No I don't ask, not my business. I am not gossip. I love British people but I am not gossip. The Spanish are gossip. The Spanish women gossip.

Daniel: But the Spanish don't really come here [to your bar].

Bar owner: I live here in Spain but really I live in Britain with British, here look around.

Daniel: So how do you make them comfortable?

Bar owner: I say "Hello, how are you?" Make them good quality drink because in Britain they are miserable but here they are very happy. I love people from UK.

## 4 Discussion

In view of its international reputation for nightlife and substances (Bellis et al 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; IREFREA, 2007; Josiam et al., 1998; Segev et al., 2005; Smeaton et al., 1998), this study provides understanding into the reasons why British youth engage in high levels of alcohol use, drug use, risk and sex behaviors while on holiday in Ibiza. The study applies ethnographic methods because previous research applies survey procedures (Bellis et al. 2000; Hughes et al., 2004; Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 2005; Hughes et al., 2009) and does not give attention enough to the potential reasons for these behaviors. As researchers, in taking part to some extent, in these activities, researchers are part of the social interactions (Inciardi, 1995) but the researchers of the present study tried not to influence the direction of the data, and instead attempted to document and understand the behavior of British youth, and how the social context shaped their behavior of the “Ibiza experience”. In doing so, the study provides some explanation of this particular culture (Van Maanen, 1988).

The data show that British youth express themselves on holiday through high levels of alcohol consumption and drug use, and engage in risk and sex behaviors (Bellis et al., 2003; Engineer et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2009) which creates a memorable holiday experience (Griffin et al., 2009). These alcohol/drug/sex events appear to liberate British youth from the banality of work and family constraints in the UK (Bellis et al., 2002; Carter, 1997; Carter et al., 1997; Ryan and Kinder, 1996) as they embrace the seduction of youthful risk taking (Hayward, 2002). In Ibiza, they seem to free to be whoever they want to be (Bauman, 2004; 2007) and do whatever they want to do; an ethos that is legitimized by peers since many British youth travel in groups to enhance the “experience”.

However, this comes at a cost - young peoples’ attitudes to spending are haphazard yet they show no regrets because work and home lives are mundane (Blackman, 1995) and

include characteristics of high uncertainty in the late modern context (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Instead, British youth on holiday invest great importance in the experience (Griffin et al., 2009) irrespective of the cost (financially, practically, physically and mentally). This expression is because, regardless of the consequences, these experiences appear to help British youth construct life biographies (Helve and Bynner, 2007) which, in turn, can be useful for future social discourse (on Facebook, with friends at social events, and until it is time for the next holiday).

These experiences are therefore integral to identity construction and are heavily shaped by the social context – in particular, by the aggressive marketing of alcohol, drugs and sex (Sellars 1998). This also appears to highlight how the identities of British youth interplay with the consumption of items such as music and drugs (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Miles, 2000). While some consider these behaviors dangerous and risky (Bellis et al., 2002; Bellis et al., 2003; Hughes et al., 2004; Hughes et al., 2009), in contrast, the data appears to highlight that these behaviors are expressive and show how British youth negotiate agency within this particular context (Ettore and Miles, 2002).

While young people engage in behavior which they perceive as “expected and typical” within the social context of Ibiza, they also recognized that the social milieu actively endorses and condones these behaviors. In fact, the data seems to suggest that Ibiza relies on the social activities of British youth to support its economy (Armstrong, 2004; Garrett, 1998) in a time when British tourist numbers are in decline (IREFREA, 2007).

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